



Frequently Asked Questions | Updated 12/7/23

Why do we need a bond?

Almont's 35-year-old high school, 24-year-old Orchard Primary School, and 18-year-old middle school are in great need of infrastructure replacements and improvements. The High school has not had major renovations since its construction in 1988. They are still using much of the same furniture from when the building opened, most of which came from the previous elementary school. The proposal includes replacing parking lots and walkways, roofing updates, LED lighting upgrades, replacing boilers, correcting drainage issues, and many improvements and additions for safety and security. The students attending our schools do not see an investment in their places of learning, often focusing on outdated technology and old and antiquated facilities that lack classroom space.

What is the remaining timeline for the bond process?

November 21st — Work session

November 27th — BOE meeting – call for election

December 5th — File for election (minimum 12 weeks prior to election)

February 27th — Election Day

How will our taxes be affected?

The school millage is not expected to increase. In fact, with this bond the millage is expected to be lowered. The Board of Education is targeting lowering from 8.45 mils in the 2023 tax year down to 7.0 mils in 2025. This means an estimated lower 2025 tax bill of 1.45 mils compared to the 2023 tax year.

How is the current bond different from the bond that was paused earlier in 2023?

The total dollar amount of this current bond is \$6.85 million less than the bond proposed in 2022. Furthermore, the previous bond proposal would have left the school millage above 8 mils while the current proposal is expected to lower the millage to 7 mils.

How much is actually available for a bond this year?

The maximum at 8.45 mills would have been \$72.4 million. The District is targeting to be substantially lower at 7.0 mills at \$58.4 million overall bond.

What is a mill/mil and what does it mean to me?

Property Tax rates in Michigan are expressed in mill rates. A mill is equal to \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 of taxable value. For example, if your total tax rate is 8.45 mills and your taxable value is \$100,000, your taxes owed would be \$845 annually. Therefore, if the Millage is 7.0, your taxes would drop to \$700 annually for this millage

How has Almont's millage changed over the years?

Until recently, Almont has been at 8.45 mills since 1986 with the building of our high school and is lowering to 8.0 mills in 2024. If the bond passes, this will mean a lower tax rate of 7.0 mills for all Almont taxpayers in the 2025 tax year. The Board of Education has kept the millage rate at the forefront of our decision-making process throughout this entire bond and has objected the "status quo" of keeping the millage rate at 8.0 mills.

Why is it important to stay at or above 7.0 mills?

7.0 mills is the threshold to qualify for borrowing from the state School Bond Loan Program. This allows us to receive substantially lower interest rates on our bonds as we essentially use the state of Michigan's credit versus our own. Interest rates are quite a bit higher, and climbing, in the private sector, for such project funding. By keeping at 7.0 mills, we pay less in overall bond interest which means more of the funding is used for projects.

How can the bond funds be used?

There are strict guidelines from the State on how Bond funds can and cannot be used. Bond funds can only be used for new construction, new items, and replacement of items. These funds are not to be used for repair or maintenance, curriculum costs, or teacher salaries. It is possible, however, to use new items or facilities purchased with bond funds to raise revenues or create savings in other areas to then offset general fund costs. The idea behind the multipurpose center/field house is that the district could use the building to generate revenue that would go back into the general fund.

What options are available for public schools in Michigan to raise revenues?

There are only a few ways that schools can raise revenues: increasing local tax revenues, grants, special State or Federal programs, cutting spending in other areas, creating new sources of revenue, and increasing the number of Schools of Choice students. As for Schools of Choice, the Board has made it a priority to closely evaluate the school-of-choice balance as demonstrated earlier this year when school-of-choice numbers were capped and closed at multiple grade levels. Currently, school-of-choice students bring in over \$3.5 million annually to our district. In addition, there are currently nearly 250 outbound Schools of Choice students from Almont's district attending school in other districts. It is imperative we look for ways to retain and draw those students back home and the upgrades that the bond could make possible would make our schools much more attractive for these students and families.

As for creating revenue, the multi-purpose center/field house offers us a possibility to do just that through indoor track meets, soccer and softball tournaments, and rec league scheduling. This is a forward-thinking option to offset general fund costs: the goal is a self-sustaining facility that would not need to dip into the general fund for operating costs or upkeep. The savings to general fund could then be used on other needs such as curriculum.

What are the benefits of the proposed multi-purpose center/fieldhouse?

Building an innovative, multi-purpose academic, art, and athletic center would make Almont a leader in high school facilities and bring our outbound school of choice families back to Almont Schools. The center could also be available for large events such as graduation, art shows, marching band events, and more. The proposed facility would alleviate the problem of scheduling practice space for multiple sports teams with the inclusion of a multi-use infield pre-lined for baseball, soccer, and football and the use of a netting system that would allow 8 groups or teams concurrent access. Potential amenities for the proposed center include raised band director platform, a band room with a roll-up door, raised seating/bleachers, a fitness center, a 200m running and walking track, added gym space, netting and pads for golf, drop-down batting cages, volleyball and tennis courts, pole vault pits, long jump pits, high jump area, indoor concessions, locker/team rooms, large multipurpose/conference room, and additional specialty classroom or team spaces such as technology, wrestling, and cheer. Intensive research has been performed on the multi-purpose center/fieldhouse, and some of the board and administration have visited existing facilities, such as Ypsilanti (LAB) and Grand Blanc. The next closest equivalent facility is in Ypsilanti, which is 80 miles (1.5 hours) away.

Why is it important to attract and retain students in the District?

Public schools in Michigan are funded on a per-pupil basis, which means that attracting and retaining students is important for funding. State-of-the-art facilities and the improvements to our programs and instruction that these facilities could provide could make our schools much more attractive for students and families. This includes the nearly 250 outbound Schools of Choice students from Almont's district who are attending school in other districts. It is imperative we look for ways to retain and draw those students back home. As for Schools of Choice students coming to Almont, these students currently bring in over \$3.5 million annually to our district. The Board has made it a priority to closely evaluate the school-of-choice balance as demonstrated earlier this year when school-of-choice numbers were capped and closed at multiple grade levels. Almont has a long tradition of academic and athletic excellence. The bond would allow our facilities to reflect that.

How is the 4th and 8th grade move being addressed in the bond?

The temporary move of the 4th and 8th grades was due to over-capacity issues and class sizes at Orchard Primary. The board and committees looked at how the district could be flexible with the schools and space needed for the fluctuation of class sizes, as well as manage the legacy costs that impact the general fund by seeking revenue sources for the schools. One such project was the option to build a flexible addition that would join Orchard Primary and the middle school. These classrooms would be able to be utilized by either school as class sizes grow and shrink from year to year, but the schools would still have flexible security separation that can move based on needs. The options and opportunity to fluctuate with our student population would

prevent grade-level moves and upheaval in the future, for both students and staff. This addition would also include a multipurpose classroom currently planned as the STEAM center which would also allow for sharing of staff and/or administrators and security between buildings. The current plan would be to move 4th grade and Preschool back to Orchard Primary and move 8th grade back to the middle school following this addition.

What are the benefits of transitioning to a turf field?

A turf field has benefits in the areas of scheduling, usage, and maintenance. Unlike grass fields, a turf field may be used by all levels of teams and can be scheduled for all hours of the day without concern for the wear and tear of the field. The spring and fall seasons are very destructive to the grass field and at the end of every season it is a “mud hole.” In 2023, Almont’s football team won home field advantage for all three playoff games, but, because of the poor condition of Almont’s field, had to use Richmond’s turf field, thus losing their “home field” advantage. Turf allows for soccer, band, football, and all other sports to use the field for practice as well as games. This also means no watering bills, lawn care, aeration, fertilization, drainage, weekly line painting, or grass clippings blown onto the track creating mold and deterioration. Our current field has countless undulations and divots that create havoc on high school athletes, marching band members, and anyone else using the field. In addition, there are eco and health-friendly options instead of rubber granules for infill, which creates a safer field.

How would the bond help our arts and music programs?

The bond would include many new projects for music and arts. The band room would receive an expansion that would nearly double its size, along with increased storage and acoustic engineering. The main gym would receive acoustical improvements for our concerts as well as portable shells for proper acoustic quality. The auditorium would be renovated with all new seating, stage access, dressing rooms, and stage renovations. The multi-purpose center/field house would be utilized to meet the need of finally providing our marching band a location other than the parking lot for practice, and possibly even marching band concerts.

What is the “sustainable impact” nature of the bond?

“Sustainable impact” in this instance refers to not dipping into our general fund and not necessarily eco-sustainability. Our goal of this bond is to ensure the bond projects impact the general fund as little as possible or, ideally, benefit it. One such consideration is using solar power to offset the district’s utility costs.

What has community input been on the bond projects?

The district has reached out multiple times for input from the community and the Almont Board of Education would like to thank the community for their feedback through the many rounds of surveys and focus panels. There was a community-wide survey sent out via Facebook, the Tri-City Times, and on the school website mid-last year. We then conducted focus panels presenting the information for a bond and requesting feedback from participants. Recently, the board invited a cross-section of the community to participate in a Bond Steering Committee in which a presentation of current bond worklists and costs were presented and feedback was collected on each line item.

The steering committee was then polled on whether they would support many of the project scopes. The community bond steering committee was especially impactful and the District is immensely grateful to the committee members for their invested hours and efforts to arrive at the final list of projects for the district.

How is the board sharing information with the broader community?

Much information is shared at monthly meetings, work sessions, and special meetings, which are all open to the public. It is imperative to keep the community updated with the most up to date and factual information. To keep up to date on the bond and new information, please visit the one true source for facts and information on the district's website bond information page:
https://www.almontschools.org/bond_information.

When is the election?

Election Day is Feb. 27, 2024. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. and voters can also vote early or vote absentee.

Who is eligible to vote for this bond?

Registered voters living in Bruce Township, Addison Township, Berlin Township, and Almont Precincts 1 & 2 are eligible to vote for this bond issue.

How do I register to vote or check my voter status?

You can check your voter registration any time at the Secretary of State voter information center at michigan.gov/vote. You can also register to vote online with a few short questions or go into your county clerk's office or local Secretary of State office. Voters in Michigan can register to vote up to and on Election Day, including during the early voting period.

How do I find my polling place?

You can find your polling location by visiting michigan.gov/vote and clicking on "Finding Your Polling Place."

TIMELINE

Early October — Construction Manager finalizes bond application and sends to Bond Attorney

Early October — Bond Attorney sends bond application to Michigan Department of Treasury

Early October — Bond Attorney develops ballot language

October 16 — Pre-qualification meeting with the Department of Treasury

October 23 — Board of Education meeting: Formally request a review of bond app

October 24 — ACS sends signed bond application to Bond Attorney

October 25 — Bond Attorney sends bond application to Dept of Treasury (30-day review process)

November 21 — Work session

November 27 — Board of Education meeting: Call for election

December 5 — File for election (minimum 12 weeks prior to election)

February 27 — Election Day